

Newsletter

ODU Department of English

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Welcome!

Greetings from the halls of the Batten Arts & Letters building on the campus of Old Dominion University. I am Dr. Veronica Watson, Chair of the Department of English and I welcome you to our newsletter.

We want you to know the English Department is on the move! We are laser-focused on the future—the ones our students are dreaming for themselves—and we are working hard to make sure that the education they get with us prepares them for the next steps they want to take. Wherever their paths may lead, English Studies provides a solid foundation.

Our alumni are proof positive that a degree in English can take you places! Last year you met an alumna who is working on a series for Disney+. This year we feature an alumna who is a communication strategist for Google.

In the coming months we'll be planning her return visit so that students can learn more about her journey into a corporate career. And as we build out a more robust internship program to support students' post-graduation success, we'll be looking for opportunities that provide an even wider range of experiences for prospective internees, from small businesses to large, from nonprofits to corporate, and from entrepreneurial ventures to emerging industries. The great thing is, when our students have these high-impact educational experiences, they also bring back a wealth of knowledge to share with their peers. That's a win-win!

But not all experiences need to take students off campus. One of our stand-out annual events is the ODU Literary Festival, which celebrated its 47th anniversary in October 2024. The faculty and students of our Creative Writing programs put on an amazingly rich, full slate of programming for the week-long event, including readings by best-selling author Dolan Perkins-Valdez and National Book Award winner Sigrid Nunez, to name but two. Lit Fest, as it is affectionately known, is also emerging as a space in which we professionalize students. They coordinate schedules and then, meet and greet visiting authors, conduct interviews, lead promotional and social media communication, and assist with logistical planning, all of which are solid experiences for the kind of team- and community-building work that are required in many careers.

In the department office, two of our social media accounts (which are our public face) and this newsletter are possible because of the excellent work undergraduate and graduate students have done to make them possible. They now have credits as writers, designers, and social media strategists that they can build on outside of ODU.

We invite you to check out our latest happenings in the pages that follow and to stay connected with us on social media to see how we continue to invest in our students and their success. And if you're alum, we want to hear from you! Please let us know what you're up to by going to the alumni survey link on page 4. We can learn a lot from you that will help us get even better. Enjoy reading!

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What Do You Like?

An Alumna's Journey
from English Lit to Google

An interview with

Chantall Hopewell

Chantal Hopewell was initially unsure of which path to take when she arrived at ODU. She originally pursued communications but quickly realized it was not the right fit for her. After a pivotal conversation with her mother, she decided to pursue English. Once Chantal discovered her passion for reading and writing, she set her sights on earning a degree in English Education.

Today she is an Organizational Effectiveness Program Manager at Google, where she gets to “wear many hats and oversee the people programs impacting organizational culture for a 13,000–person organization that helps power Google’s AI”. While her career may seem quite different from what we typically think English majors do, Chantal credits her English degree with providing many of the essential skills she needed for success.



Why did you major in English? Did you have an idea of what you wanted to do with your English degree when you were an undergraduate?

When I went to college, I was not clear what I wanted to do. I came as a comms major before realizing, “I don’t want to do this.” I then went to human services and quickly realized that also was not what I wanted to do. So, my mom sat me down and she said, “You have four years to graduate college, and you need to figure it out. What do you like?” I remember saying, “Well, I love to read. I’m an okay writer.” And she says, “Okay, well, why don’t you start with that?”

I remember going into [Batten Arts and Letters Building] and thinking, “Maybe I’ll just major in English. I like to read. It’s fun... Maybe I will become a teacher.” But after doing my student shadowing, I went back to the drawing board on a career. Thankfully, around that time ODU’s career board had an internship with the federal government doing security clearance investigations. An alumna of ODU had posted it and she was adamant about hiring a student. I saw the posting, reached out, and the next day I had an interview. The job focused on investigations and analyzing data and had a huge report writing component. I remember thinking, “This is super cool. I didn’t even know a job like this could exist.”

I started the beginning of my junior year and by the end of the semester, they said, “Well, you’ve done an exceptional job. Would you be interested in a position when you graduate?” I replied, “Absolutely!”

More than 80% of the job was writing. I reviewed documents, summarized and synthesized data, and I wrote reports. Those reports helped someone to decide if a person’s investigation advanced. I truly believe if it weren’t for my literature degree, I wouldn’t be here.

You have an interest in Organizational Psychology and went on to earn a degree in Safety and Security Leadership. How does your English background fit into those interests?

Org psych always was interesting to me because psychology helps to explain how and why people do things. But people also operate in defined groups, cultures, and organizations, and what that does to people’s psyche is very interesting. The psychological part of an organization that has crazy revenue targets is very different than say, an organization that’s really [focused] on consumer trust and safety, right? And then I can go a step further and talk about going from a really large company like Google to a start up like Instacart. Those organizations are very, very different, and those differences influence how people show up.

But I see a connection to English when I think about how we are trained to think about communication and writing. There's so much intention around words we choose and how we choose to say them in certain types of environments. For instance, the environment that I'm in now has incredibly high goals, like, "we need to reach X million by the end of the quarter or by the end of the year." In order to motivate and inspire people, you have really strong language around, "We're committed. We're driving change. It's our responsibility." You're influencing people to approach work a specific kind of way so we can meet these targets. When we think about safety, we're really clear: "We put our users first. Safety is our focus." So, it's all about the language we choose and how that influences people.

How would you describe your current position?

I'm an organizational program manager. I'm the dot connector. Anytime our organization has a program or new update that's come from our central team, it goes to my general manager. If it touches on people within the organization, it comes to me to ensure that we're appropriately thinking about the entire organization that spans across the world. We have folks who are in Israel, India, and Australia, for instance. I think about all of the people who make up our organization and connect those dots to make sure we can actually land whatever it is.

My work is 60% about getting communications out. I drive newsletters internally for my organization. I send updates to senior leadership so they're clear on how we're trending with the requirements we have to meet. I ensure that when we have our all-teams meeting where my VP speaks to all of the work that we're doing across teams across the world, he has his talking points and his scripts, [and] I make sure that the information we're providing on our slides is crisp and good to go. An example of one of the projects I'm working on right now is [our] employee sentiment survey. This survey happens once a week, which is a lot, but it gives me a lot of data to analyze. I meet with leaders to share the findings and then I work on a whole campaign.

Everything ties back to some element of writing and being able to communicate it to different audiences. Knowing how to communicate is a skill that you learn with an English degree. Being able to tailor communications in a particular way so people are clear about what needs to be done and why, is a skill that I attribute mostly to my time studying literature at ODU.

How do you use your English degree outside of your job or in your day-to-day life?

My ability to read, synthesize, and summarize was a skill that I really enhanced when I was at ODU and I use them in my personal life. I [still] read a ton and I journal a lot. And I plan a lot of family stuff that requires a communicating with annoying sisters and parents to get them to get on board with our family vacations and other events. (Laughs)

One thing I used to do outside of work when I first moved to California back in 2017 was that I was a volunteer essay reviewer. Figuring out college is probably one of the hardest things to do and we had students who were from a particular socioeconomic background who didn't have resources that other students had. They needed help getting prepped for college. I not only would help them draft their college essays, but also walk them through the review process before they would send the essays in. I was grateful to have the opportunity to work with a really awesome student who ended up not only getting into college, but we also helped with scholarship essays and she was able to get a full ride. That was really cool.

If you could go back in time, what advice would you give yourself for the future?

I would say to own it. I struggled a lot with owning the work that I did. I used to do internal corporate investigations. I did the slides, I had the talking points, and I did some of the analysis. I remember my manager saying, "Your name's not on your presentation." And I was like, "Huh?" He said, "This is your work...you have to own it."

I struggled a lot with being hypercritical and always seeking perfection. I always thought it could be better. Sometimes that would get into the way of me realizing I produced a great product and being able to take credit for my work. So that is what I would tell myself.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and conciseness.





The Time is Now:

English Internships Have Arrived!

It's an exciting time for the English department's internship program! In early 2024, Old Dominion University was awarded a \$5 million grant by the Mellon Foundation to create the Monarch Humanities Internship Academy (MHIA), which provides resources to humanities majors seeking internships. The Mellon grant will make internships more accessible by eliminating financial barriers for students to pursue them. This grant also supports ODU's goal to have all students participate in internships or work-based learning before graduation by 2027.



The English department's new Internship Director, Dr. Sarah Lacy, has been at ODU since 2022, though this is her first year heading the internship program. She is also the first full-time faculty member to serve as director. Dr. Lacy's expertise is in rhetoric and composition; she has an interest in pedagogy, including how teachers give feedback on student writing and how students use that feedback, as well as work-based learning. She sees clear connections between her work and the internship program.

"One of my biggest focuses is how we, in all of our classes, prepare students for work beyond the university," said Dr. Lacy. "So doing internships with our English majors is kind of a natural place for me to be."

Within the English department, Lacy encourages professors to build work-based learning into their courses and mention internships to their students, which many already do. There are also plans for the English internship program to make its presence more known, with Dr. Lacy and her graduate assistant, Bridget Dolan (Internship Coordinator), visiting classes to share information about internship opportunities.

Dr. Lacy and Dolan are both excited for the opportunity to build the internship program. One of their initiatives right now is designing an [internship website](#) specifically for the English Department. Dolan is spearheading that project, working with Prof. Anders Nolan and intern Reagan Williams to update the site. The new site features a clean, easy to navigate design that provides information on internships, interviews with interns (past and present), and the internship program's team. The site also includes resources about the Monarch Humanities Internship Academy, networking with professors, frequently asked questions about internships, Mellon grant funding, and how to apply for an internship.

Other changes Dolan is working on include streamlining the application and creating a graphic to run on the screens in the Batten Arts & Letters building to promote the program. "I'm just excited about growing the program," Dolan said. Part of that excitement stems from Dolan's own experience during her undergraduate degree. "I'm super passionate about getting students internships. I found it to be a valuable experience."



Students can initiate the process and find internship opportunities by contacting either Dr. Lacy or the MHIA for guidance. Once they've obtained an internship, they will fill out an application and once placed, sign up for a course (either credit or non-credit bearing) to make the internship official. Students then keep track of their internship hours, write two reflections on their experience, and complete an e-portfolio as their final project. For more information about the English department internships program, contact englishinternships@odu.edu.



Meet Our Faculty

In the Classroom & Beyond



Carolyn King

Assistant Professor
Director of WAC/WID & Stem
Initiatives for the Writing Center

Dr. Carolyn King grew up right outside of D.C. in College Park, MD. She received her PhD from the University of Delaware

(English: composition and rhetoric), and her research focuses upon the reading-writing connection, specifically, seeking to understand how students read and work with texts as they write source-based papers. She serves as one of the Co-Chairs for the Reading special interest group at the Conference on College Composition & Communication (CCCC).

Fun Fact:

"I'm a huge LOTR (Lord of the Rings) fan, and my dogs are named Gondor (because 'Gondor calls for aid') and Radegast (because he is 'Radegast the Brown'). They're both rescues, of course."

Recently Read:

"My favorite 'relaxing' kind of reading is *Pride and Prejudice* Fan Fiction. There's something so comforting about knowing that Darcy and Elizabeth will end up together, no matter what new twists the story takes."

Disability & Health Professions
(ENGL 231C)



What is this course about?

Our 231C section will investigate Disability and Health Professions—examining issues of how disability is constructed and reproduced, and the implications this has for people with disabilities as they navigate access in their daily lives (especially in health and medical settings). This course will begin with an introduction to concepts of disability representation, and will ask you to think deeply and critically about the way representations of disability influence treatment, access to, and approaches to health and health-related issues.

What are you looking forward to teaching in Spring 2025?

This spring, I'm excited to teach "Disability and Health Professions" as a special topics, ENGL231C course. We'll get to learn to research and write, while we also think about how disability is constructed through texts in health-care spaces.



Congratulations

to **Dr. Marc Ouellette** on receiving an award from the Mentorship & Leadership Council of the National Communication Association for making "a significant difference in helping their students and colleagues become better teachers, scholars, and community members within their institutions." NCA is among the oldest organizations in the field and has nearly 7,000 members, mainly from the U.S. The award is the result of a generous nomination by his graduate students, as well as his second national award in two years. Well done, Dr. Ouellette!



Summer Ortiz

Lecturer

Dr. Summer Sutton Ortiz grew up in Virginia Beach. She's happy to be back in Hampton Roads after several years in Southern California, which has superior tacos but subpar pumpkin patches. While in California, she earned her PhD in English from the University of California, Riverside.

Fun Fact:

I am a lifelong animal lover. I have two cats, who are currently in the midst of an enemies-to-lovers situation, and three dogs— a golden retriever, a German shepherd, and a chihuahua with a Napoleon complex, the self-appointed alpha of the pack. She's always eager to chat about pet life.



Recently Read:

"A Rome of One's Own: The Forgotten Women of the Roman Empire by Emma Southon. It's a creative and often hilarious feminist historiography of Ancient Rome."

What are you looking forward to teaching in Spring 2025?

"I am looking forward to teaching ENGL 110 in the Spring. I hope to refine a new assignment that has students profile either an historical or contemporary aspect of the ODU community. I think it will be a great way of getting students to pursue creative ways of interacting with and preserving local histories."

Thea Williamson

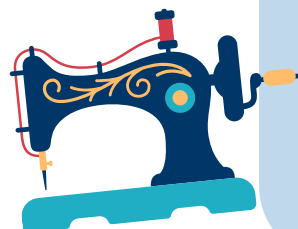
Assistant Professor

Dr. Thea Williamson graduated from high school in Virginia Beach, then moved up and down the east coast, majoring in Spanish and Comparative Literature at Haverford College, teaching high school English in Miami, and working as an after school program director in New York City.

She earned her PhD in Language and Literacy studies in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin. Ella es bilingüe y habla español. Her research focuses on adolescents' multilingual literacies, writing pedagogy, and critical perspectives on English Language Arts curriculum.

Recently Read:

"To Shape a Dragon's Breath: The First Book of Nampeshiweisit, by Moniquill Blackgoose. It's a speculative fiction novel that imagines a New England without English colonists, where Vikings have settled and have a different relationship to the native people."



Fun Fact:

"After I finished graduate school, I bought my first sewing machine—she is a Bernina Record from the 1970s. Now I make my own garments and always have a few quilting projects in the works. My creative textile work is usually improvisational and focused on reuse and transformation of dressmaking remnants."





Travis Alexander

Assistant Professor

Dr. Travis Alexander joins ODU's English Department from Rice University, where he completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Medical Humanities. Before that, he was a doctoral student down the road at UNC-Chapel Hill, and an

undergraduate a bit farther away at UT-Austin. Travis grew up in San Antonio, Texas, which is still evident to anyone with a keen ear for dialects. In his spare time, he loves to cook, walk his miniature dachshund, and run. He is also an obsessive reader of detective fiction.

Fun Fact:

"If I weren't an English professor, my dream job would be directing media strategy (i.e., dirty tricks) for a political campaign."

Recently Read:

"I recently loved Michael Tackett's new biography of Mitch McConnell, 'The Price of Power.'"



What are you looking forward to teaching in Spring 2025?

"I'm excited to teach Psychoanalytic Theory (English 791/891). It will be my first graduate seminar!"

Reading Romance

English 215, CRN 21124
Spring 2025, MWF @ 10 A.M.



Take a deep dive into the bestselling fiction genre to explore its classical roots and twenty-first century innovations. Using formal analysis and feminist scholarship, we'll wrestle with what makes happy endings compelling.

Email kcbennet@odu.edu

ENGL 346: AMERICAN LITERATURE SINCE 1860



Spring 2025, MWF @ 11 A.M.

In *A Letter from the South* (2019), Anna Julia Cooper writes, "For nations as for individuals, a product, to be worthy the time literature, must contain something characteristic and not generic." In this class, we will explore what literature writers in the United States since 1860 reveal about our national character. We will engage with multiple authors and literary movements, focusing on three time periods: the late nineteenth century (including regionalism, realism, and naturalism); the early twentieth century (modernism); and the post-war period (postmodernism and contemporary).

This two-year period corresponds with tremendous change in the political and cultural history of the nation, and we will discuss how industrialization, urbanization, imperial expansion, immigration, and various social movements have been represented in literature. At the end of the semester, you will better understand the connected nature of American identity with respect to subjectivity, personal agency, and selfhood, racial difference and citizenship, and gender and the family.

Email kcbennet@odu.edu with questions.

What are you looking forward to teaching in Spring 2025?

"I hope that my ENGL 215L section on reading romance (novels, yes, but also poetry, creative nonfiction, and Shakespeare) is going to be a blast, as will English 346, an examination of American literature since 1860. The latter, alas, features less sword fighting."

Katie Bennett

Lecturer

Dr. Katie Bennett grew up in Great Falls, Montana, and she moved to DC after college as part of the Truman Scholarship program. She left Capitol Hill to get an MA in English from Boston College and a PhD in American studies from William and Mary.

She specializes in nineteenth-century American book history and popular culture as well as the rewards and challenges of teaching general education literature. She's also a working novelist.

Fun Fact:

"I keep a sourdough starter (Agnes), two giant continental rabbits (Peter and Dumpling), a flock of hens (Hester, Prudence, and M&M), a dog (Gromit), and a cat (Stella)."

Recently Read:

"I've been inhaling Mick Herron's *Slough House* series this year, and I would love to talk about the use of omniscient narration in them with anyone else who might be similarly obsessed."



In Conversation: **Dr. Alberdeston**

In 2023–2024, you appeared in the newsletter as a new faculty member. What interesting or fun things have you discovered about ODU and how have you settled in to the wider ODU community since then?

I feel fed by our vibrant student population and our faculty. I may sound like a nerd, but I enjoy our department and program meetings, the workshops, and seminars held for my professional development. And this list includes ODU Litfest, and Neon Arts Fest, and visits to Borjo Coffeehouse and Eleanor's Books. The campus is also an attractive site where inspiration is nestled everywhere: in the trees, at the bridge outside BAL, even from the window in my office.

Do you have any recent publications, upcoming workshops or conference presentations that you would be willing to share?

My novel *Colony 51* is slated for release by Jaded Ibis Press next year. It's been a very long writing process and exercise in revision, but I've learned many things about who I am as a writer and who I want to be. I'm happy to say that I also have work pending publication in *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*. That is one goal that I can scratch off my bucket list. There's a vision board always in my head! Moving things from dream to reality is an ongoing challenge.

Have you had any engaged in any interdisciplinary study or collaboration with others whose work might not be, at least on a surface, in the same domain as your own?

I'm a member of a team studying the vital work of doulas in the Hampton Roads area. This is in response to the rising number of maternal deaths within the African American community, nationally, regionally, and locally. My wonderful colleagues are Dr. Elizabeth Groenveld, Department of Women and Gender Studies, Dr. Dasaunda Taylor, School of Public Health, and Dr. Elizabeth Brown, School of Public Health. I'm driven by their steadfast interest and care in developing a narrative from the doula research project which will reach many community members.



Dr. Jane E. Alberdeston
Assistant Professor

ODU's English Department offers a wide array of undergraduate and graduate level courses that enable students to explore different corners of the field. What might prospective students, or their family members, be surprised to learn about our programs?

That's an important question because part of being at this institution is appreciating choice. Our program excites me because of the diversity you find in the curriculum, fed by the faculty's expertise, backgrounds, and experiences. Moreover, the department is dynamic and engaged in developing challenging and engaging learning environments. Spend a little time with faculty or staff member and you'll see a glint in the eye, a look to the future. That's what moves me most.

Are you teaching any upcoming courses that you are particularly excited about?

I'm absolutely bubbling over! This Spring, I'll teach a Writing, Rhetoric, and Research course (ENGL-231C) which will lead to a community project. I'll also teach a ENGL-795 course called *Literary Morsels: Food in Literature*.

Is there any course (or area of study) that you see as a hidden gem that you think would appeal to students who may not have considered it? If yes, why might students love it if they engaged in that learning?

The first that comes to mind is a suggestion to take creative writing courses, but that's my background and I'm biased. I'll instead offer students the challenge of taking courses that might inspire anxiety or fear, such as a course on Shakespeare's poetry or plays. That's the challenge of being at a university. Don't be swayed by your or another's fears. You'll look back on the college experience and remember how you stepped up for yourself.

Why might students consider pursuing one of the graduate degrees in the English department at ODU?

Though I can appreciate the value of AI (when it is used for good), I will always trust that our world needs more creators and more critical thinkers. No machine can replace the core of who we are and how we make the world turn, in good works and otherwise. The heart and spirit of our stories, offered in a lush and ever-changing language, is what shapes our graduates and the leaders we need to steer us into a positive future.

Follow us!



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ODU English Department



odu.edu/english

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
THE WINNER OF**

*The Ron Jet Jones Memorial
Scholarship in English*

Amani Sanders



Meet

Inga Kotlo

Fulbright Visiting Scholar!

Inga Kotlo is from Bosnia and Herzegovina and is a 3rd year PhD student in English and Linguistics at the University of Sarajevo. The English Department hosted her as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar in Fall 2024.

Ms. Kotlo has been a Senior Teaching Assistant at the Department of English Language and Literature since 2017 and works at four units of the Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar (UNMO) – Faculty of Humanities, Tourism Studies, Faculty of Economics, and Faculty of Law. She holds a BA in Bosnian and English language and literature (UNMO), an MA in Human Rights and Democracy (University of Sarajevo – UNSA and the University of Bologna – UNIBO), and an MA in English Language Translation (UNMO). She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Linguistics at UNSA.

Her dissertation will focus on Bosnian-English translated texts on tourism websites. In addition to her PhD work, she is the Program Coordinator of the American Corner Mostar, and the leader of a local activist project in Mostar, Boulevard of Friendship, which aims to revive the neglected neighborhood in the heart of the city along the former war frontline.

In Conversation: **Dr. Rodrigues**

What was the journey that brought you to ODU?

I came to ODU in 2022 after spending a decade in Tennessee as a PhD student and in my first academic job after graduating. I'm delighted to be in Norfolk now, as I'm an East Coast person through-and-through! My scholarly background is in Shakespeare and early modern literature, but I also do research and teach in media studies, queer theory, and digital humanities—an approach that uses computational tools to solve humanistic problems.

How have your lived experiences benefited, or encouraged, your academic pursuits?

In a former life I was an activist and organizer for the National LGBTQ Task Force, a job that took me around the country to work with organizations fighting homophobic and racist ballot measures. I realized I wasn't cut out for doing that kind of work long-term, but I never lost sight of the values that motivated me to become an organizer. For better or worse, then, my interest in social justice is not merely an intellectual stance but something that is truly baked into my personality.

I also briefly worked in the New York fashion industry—if you take a class with me, you just might hear some juicy gossip!

Do you have any recent publications, upcoming workshops or conference presentations that you would be willing to share?

This past year I've spent much of my time writing a series of essays on queer and trans identity in early modern literature. These essays will appear in book collections. I was honored earlier this year to be invited to present my work on Love's Martyr, in which "The Phoenix and Turtle" first appeared, at a conference at Oxford University. At the upcoming Renaissance Society of America conference in Boston, I'm co-leading a panel on the subject of "RenAIssance Studies," where participants will examine relationships between the Renaissance and AI.



Dr. Don Rodrigues
Assistant Professor

The English department at ODU offers such a wide array of undergraduate and graduate level courses that enable students to explore different corners of the field or to specialize in specific areas. What might prospective students, or their family members, be surprised by in our English program(s)?

I'm constantly impressed by the intellectual diversity of our department! Students here can take courses with literature scholars, poets, novelists, game studies scholars, education specialists, experts in rhetoric and composition, linguists, more. You can emerge from ODU with a truly capacious grounding in how English studies matters in the world around us. I think some might be surprised to learn that our department has experts who specialize in the study of colonialism (Dr. Zarook), indigenous literature and history (Dr. Lopenzina), disability studies (Dr. Osorio), classical rhetoric (Dr. Keefe), video game studies (Dr. Moberly), health and medicine (Dr. Alexander), and even the study of gardens and the environment (Dr. Kilcline). Dr. Kilcline also runs m-park, a makerspace where students use 3D printers to explore and develop their ideas. Beyond the classes we offer, folks might be surprised to learn that our resident Victorianist, Dr. Mourao, is an accomplished visual artist, and that Dr. Lopenzina is a member of a popular folk band!

Are you teaching any upcoming courses that you are particularly excited about?

I'm very excited to teach "Shakespeare's Tragedies and Poems" in spring 2025. We'll learn about the extremely strange personalities of the real-life English kings and queens that influenced or appeared in his works. We'll also be watching a lot of movies! At the graduate level, I'm thrilled to teach a new seminar in media studies focused on the video game Baldur's Gate 3, which we'll play and examine as an aesthetic object while reading works from the Middle Ages to the present that have influenced the development of contemporary role playing games. We'll also be reading lots of theory and philosophy!

Do you see any of the learning in your courses utilized by students in any new, unexpected, or exciting ways?

Many of my former students have gone on to secure prestigious internships and fellowships or gained admission to competitive law schools, business schools, nursing schools, engineering schools, MFA programs, and PhD programs. An English double major or minor is the perfect complement to anyone seeking admission to medical school, as it demonstrates that you have a broad understanding of human behavior and humanity in general. There is no technical career path where a degree in English literature will not distinguish you favorably from virtually everyone you will work with. You might also become the most interesting person in the office.

How would building expertise in literature be beneficial after graduation?

There is this myth that studying literature will leave you without a good job. This is untrue, as numerous studies have shown! English majors—and in particular, majors who study literature—have gone on to become teachers, lawyers, managers, CEO's, even senators and US Presidents. The skills you learn analyzing, discussing, and debating complex works of literature prepare you to become leaders and can give you a huge edge in job interviews.

English Majors and Minors:

Are you getting emails from the English department? If not, email englishdept@odu.edu to stay up to date!



The logo is circular with a red border. Inside the circle, the text "SIGMA TAU DELTA" is written in a semi-circle at the top, and "CENTENNIAL" is written in a semi-circle at the bottom. In the center, there is a large "T" with a quill pen and a torch crossed behind it. Below the "T" is the number "100" with "YEARS" underneath it. To the left of the "T" is the Greek letter "Σ" and to the right is the Greek letter "Δ". Above the "T" is the year "1924" and below the "T" is the year "2024".

Setting Standards with Sigma Tau Delta

Sigma Tau Delta is the international English Honor Society that seeks to honor student achievement in English language and literature in undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies. Although first and foremost an honor society, each chapter is structured differently, recently, Old Dominion University's chapter has been quite active, hosting events such as book swaps, game nights, and a very successful symposium, which highlighted the efforts toward the preservation of Indigenous language.

The ODU chapter is currently **welcoming new members**, both graduate and undergraduate, and the **first 15 memberships are covered by the department**. A student is eligible for Sigma Tau if they hold a GPA of at least 3.3, have taken two English courses beyond their general education requirement, and have completed three semesters of college work. The full requirement list can be found on Sigma Tau Delta's national site [here](#).

Before the end of the Fall semester, a call will be made via email to eligible English majors, and new members will be inducted into the society in the spring. An awards ceremony is held in April, where students are invited and recognized for their achievements.

Benefits to being in Sigma Tau Delta include an opportunity to have work published in their literary journal, the chance to complete for scholarships, and access to the society's annual conference. The ODU chapter is seeking new leadership and all open positions will be welcome to new members, regardless of experience.

Reflections

on the 47th Annual ODU Literary Festival

Marianne Chan

A Week of Storytelling, Imagination, and Creative Collaboration

The 47th Annual Old Dominion University Literary Festival once again brought a week-long celebration of writing and storytelling to our campus and the greater Hampton Roads community. This year's theme, Ancient Futures, explored how history and imagination intersect, featuring authors who draw from the past to shape visions of our future.

The festival welcomed twenty-two exceptional writers and artists, hailing from Virginia and across the globe. Among the highlights were National Book Award winner Sigrid Nunez, New York Times bestselling novelist Dolen Perkins-Valdez, American Book Award winner Beth Nguyen, debut novelist Devika Rege, and memoirist Rebekah Taussig, whose critically acclaimed *Sitting Pretty* was selected for the NEA Big Read. With the support of NEA funding and the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, Rebekah Taussig delivered the festival's keynote lecture, "Healthcare: Transforming the Patient Experience." Other featured authors included Micah Nemerever, SJ Sindu, Geoff Bouvier, and Yalie Kamara.

The festival also celebrated the work of Anna Qu, the MFA Creative Writing Program's Fall 2024 Edith and Forrest P. White Writer in Residence, who read from her memoir *Made in China*. In addition, three faculty members from the MFA Creative Writing Program—Luisa A. Igloria, Kent Wascom, and festival co-director Marianne Chan—shared readings from their newly published works. True to tradition, the festival honored the achievements of ODU students and alumni. This year, alumna Lucian Mattison read from his new poetry collection, *Curare*, while the the Barry Arts Museum hosted the launch of a new ODU student anthology, *Constellate*. Moreover, current MFA student Taylor Ebersole and undergraduate student Eben Bracy were both awarded the Jerri Dickeski Fiction Prize. The prize, judged by Lit Fest author SJ Sindu, recognizes the most promising student writers at ODU.

The festival also featured several exciting multidisciplinary collaborations. Poet Remica Bingham-Risher celebrated the release of her new collection, *Room Swept Home*, with a poetry-dance performance alongside Christal Brown, Associate Professor of Dance and Chair of the Dance Program at Middlebury College. Additionally, Manuela Mourao presented her new paper, "More Love Letters, Please!": Portuguese Love and the Literary Legacy of Sincere Feeling," at the Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries, alongside an exhibition of her paintings, titled *From the Heart*. ODU faculty Drew Lopenzina (English) and Liz Black (World Languages & Cultures) added a musical touch with their performance as *Wine Dark Sea*.



Rebekah Taussig



Dolen Perkins-Valdez



Sigrid Nunez



Manuela Mourao

As always, the Literary Festival thrives on its strong partnerships with ODU's diverse departments and the broader local community. These collaborations give students a unique opportunity to engage with the broader literary ecosystem of Hampton Roads. This year, we continued our work with the Department of World Languages and Cultures, hosting Quebecois poet Andréane Frenette-Vallières in a bilingual conversation with Dr. Peter Schulman. This event celebrated literary voices in languages other than English, inspiring our multilingual students to consider the possibilities of their own creative paths.

A special highlight of the festival was the reception hosted by Charlene Moring, which preceded Sigrid Nunez's event, as well as the ODU-EVMS Integration Committee reception. This gathering brought together faculty from ODU and Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) in anticipation of Dolen Perkins-Valdez's reading. These events, along with others held throughout the fall, fostered a collaborative spirit among faculty working toward a shared mission of shaping the next generation of creative thinkers, leaders, and professionals.

Local literary partners, including Eleanor's Bookstore and Prince Books, handled book sales during the festival, while The Muse Writers Center continued to support our mission in numerous ways. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to making this year's festival a success, especially the dedicated team at Arts@ODU and the talented students in the MFA Creative Writing program. We look forward to welcoming you to next year's festival and, for many of you, to our creative writing classrooms at ODU!

— John McManus and Marianne Chan,
Festival Co-Directors



Kent Wascom



Lucien Mattison



Liz Black and Drew Lopenzina as Wine Dark Sea



Luisa Igloria



John McManus



Collaboration between poet
Remica Bingham Risher and dancer
Christal Brown

Heather Weddington

Winner of Excellence in Advising Award



The ODU English department would like to celebrate the contributions of Chief Departmental Advisor Heather Weddington. Her dedication has earned her the honor of being selected by the Old Dominion Advising Network (ODAN) as the winner of the Excellence in Advising Award in the Faculty Advisor category. Professor Weddington has been with the department since 2011. She stepped into the Chief Departmental Advisor role in 2021, when she helped implement many structural changes to advising within the department.

Professor Weddington's philosophy with students is to take the time to listen. She not only asks a student what classes they want to take, but also asks about their goals, interests, and challenges. She makes it a point to know what resources are available so that she can help students navigate their academic path. Professor Weddington also prioritizes effective communication with faculty advisors. She is always looking for ways to enhance advising within the department and support students more.

Professor Weddington expressed deep gratitude for this recognition, sharing that she is so proud to see her efforts and those of the faculty advisors. "[The award] shows that we care about our students...and it shows that ODU cares about our faculty advisors."

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF

The James B. Reese Endowed Scholarship

The James B. Reese Endowed Scholarship is awarded to undergrads with at least a 3.0 GPA who demonstrate financial need and submit an essay on why they chose to major in English.



Briyah M. Fuller
Yasmin Edwards
Caleb Q. Summers
Michael Harrington
Jackson Midyette
Lauren Westcott



Spring 2025 Course Highlights

General Education

Literature and Culture/Taylor's Version ENGL 215L

This course invites students to fearlessly journey through Taylor Swift's music alongside a survey of selected literature both referenced by Swift and connected thematically by more invisible strings. Students will interpret, analyze, and evaluate a wonderland of fiction, poetry, and drama for form, meaning, and themes we recognize all too well. By studying how writers carry on timeless ideas, through the lens of Swift's work, students will grapple with the alchemy of the human condition, the story of us, as conveyed through music and literature. Are you ready for it?

Skills developed in **General Education**:

- Critical thinking
- Close reading and interpretation
- Engagement with diverse perspectives and worldviews
- Analytical thinking and writing
- Contemporary reflection and historical consciousness

Creative Writing

Introduction to Creative Writing ENGL 300W

Do you have a story to tell? If you're remotely interested in moving someone with nothing but your words, then take Intro to Creative Writing. We'll explore Poetry, Creative Nonfiction, and Fiction that inspires and challenges us. We'll laugh every class while analyzing creative works and build a community that strengthens one another. We'll write original poems, flash essays, and short stories to improve our future writings, whether our writing goals are traditional, independent, and/or fanfiction. Throughout the semester we'll also dive into career opportunities for writers, English Majors, and English Minors. This is your jumping off point for a more creative and stable future.

Careers in the field of **Creative Writing**:

- Writers
- Reporters and Correspondents
- Film and Video Producers

Technical & Professional Writing

Technical Writing ENGL 334W

Technical writing is a broad field with many exciting facets. From the more traditional writing of user manuals and research reports, to the more current uses in public relations and social media, technical writers are often asked to wear many hats. Preparing for the many important roles of technical writers, this course focuses on the ideas and concepts that can give you a strategy for effective communication in professional settings—and that can also be useful for finding a job in the technical writing field. Overall, this course provides innovative ideas and useful practice for solving high level communication problems that are common in professional settings.

Careers in the field of **Technical Writing**:

- Editors and Copyeditors
- Technical Writers
- Grant Writers
- Science Communicators

Journalism

The Press and The Making of The American Democracy ENGL 385

In this course, students will study the role journalism and a free press have played in American history from the Colonial period to the current digital age. Most significantly, students will understand the connection between a free press and the development of democratic institutions. At a time of polarized American politics, this course is essential in understanding how journalism has framed the debates of the past and into the present day. In this course, students will explore a range of archival newspapers from the 1700s to the present, 20th century radio and TV broadcasts, and digital platforms that have transformed the way Americans access the news. How will advances in Artificial Intelligence shape the future of journalism and our democracy?

Careers in the field of **Journalism**:

- Broadcast News Analysts
- Radio and Television Announcers
- Journalists

Literature

World Literature II ENGL 363

The 17th century represents an explosion in literature around the globe, with new print technologies enabling new forms of literature and literacy. We will start this course by reading and thinking about Early Modern and 18th century literature ranging from Early Modern Arab authors, Edo Period Japanese authors, and of course, the new ways of thinking and writing in France, Sweden, Germany, and Russia. Throughout the 18th century, we will look at the global literatures reflect the rise of new empires and nationalisms, how we conceptualize affect and psychology, and what world literature tells us about human eudaemonia moving through the start to the end of the colonial empires on all continents.

Careers in the field of **Literature**:

- English Language and Literature Teachers
- Higher Education Professionals
- Education Administrators
- Acquisition Editors
- Attorneys

Applied Linguistics

Forensic Linguistics ENGL 445

This class is an introduction to forensic linguistics—the application of linguistic analysis to language as it is used in legal contexts (in federal, state, and local code, legal documents, in government and the judicial process, and in the courts). Course topics include: written language, deceptive language, interaction in the legal process (interviews, interrogations, courtroom discourse), authorship analysis, speaker identification and profiling, multilingualism, trademarks and product warnings, language and sexual crimes, and terrorism. Students will become familiar with debates in the forensic domain, theoretical issues, and tools of analysis which are suited to forensic work. Students will apply linguistic methods of analysis to forensic data in analytical assignments and will present an “expert testimony” or “forensic linguistic commentary” for a case to the class.

Careers in the field of **Applied Linguistics**:

- Copywriters
- Translators and Interpreters
- Criminal Justice Professionals

English with Teaching Licensure

The Teaching of Composition, Grades 6–12 ENGL 455

In this course, students will explore research, theory, pedagogy, and curricula in writing, inquiring into how best to teach writing in middle school and high school English classes. Students will be invited to participate in a writing workshop to develop new understandings about their own practices and processes, as writers, and to learn from the decision-making of writers whose work they will explore and respond to. During this field experience, students will observe and collaborate with writing center tutors to support undergraduate and graduate writers who are working on a wide range of projects.

Careers in the field of **English with Teaching Licensure**:

- Teachers
- K–12 Administrators
- Editors
- Recreation Workers
- Instructional Coordinators



STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

ODU students publish their works in all genres while they matriculate through our programs. Here are some recent publications by our Monarchs!

2 0 2 3

Cyndy Lopez Guerrero

PhD, Concentration: Rhetoric, Writing, & Discourse Studies

"Feed More Back: Multimodal Feedback Toward Relationship-Rich Writing Courses"

Publication: *Pedagogicon*

David Prihoda

PhD, Concentration: Technology and Media Studies

"A Slave Obeys: Capital Violence and Illusory Agency in BioShock."

Publication: *European Conference of Games Based Learning*

Emily Haven

PhD, Concentration: Literary and Cultural Studies

"In Defense of Theater: How to Start a Theater Program at Your School Regardless of Budget or School Size"

Publication: *ElevAATE: Perspectives in Theater & Education with the American Alliance for Theater & Education*

Holly Coleman

PhD, Concentration: Literary and Cultural Studies

"Reproach or Reverence: How Poetics Shaped the Greatest American Novelist"

Publication: *Mark Twain Journal*, vol. 61, no. 2

Jessica Stanley

PhD, Concentration: Literary and Cultural Studies

"Big Sword-in-the-Stone Energy: Queering the Arthurian Romance Pattern in She-Ra and the Princesses of Power."

Publication: *Studies in Medievalism XXXII: Medievalism in Play*

John Lighthouse

MFA, Creative Writing

"Notes from the Delta Spirits"

Publication: *The Deadlands*, Issue 32.

Joshua Nieubuert

PhD, Concentration: Rhetoric, Writing, & Discourse Studies

"Nieubuert on Sloss, Tyrants on Twitter: Protecting Democracies from Information Warfare"

Publication: *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences*

"Information Literacy, Media Literacy, and the Attitudinal Positioning of WPAs Combatting Mis/disinformation"

Publication: 沖縄キリスト教学院大学論集 (Okinawa Christian University Review), 20

Sam New

MFA, Creative Writing

- **"I began with listening"**
- **"Her Ghost"**
- **"The Enemy"**

Publication: *Waccamaw Journal*, Issue 28

"Reverse Motion"

Publication: *Barely South Review*

"The Blue Door"

Publication: *Virginia Poets Database*, Spotlight on Ecopoetry



Bridget Dolan

PhD, Concentration: Literary and Cultural Studies (Self-Designed)

- **"Ars Poetica"**
- **"Breakfast for Two"**

Publication: Constellate

Cyndy Lopez Guerrero

PhD, Concentration: Rhetoric, Writing, & Discourse Studies

"Who Tells Your Story: The Power of Counterstory and Conversations of Positionality in First-Year Writing"

Publication: Positionality in Writing Studies Research: Pedagogies and Practices for Relational Accountability

David Prihoda

PhD, Concentration: Technology and Media Studies

- **"Bottle of Djinn"**
- **"Second Djinneration"**

Publication: Constellate

Elena Knudsen

MFA, Creative Writing

"Between My Teeth"

Publication: Grim & Gilded, Issue 21

Holly Coleman

PhD, Concentration: Literary and Cultural Studies

"Oystering in Times of Uncertainty"

Publication: Constellate

Ifrah Yousuf

MFA, Creative Writing

"How to introduce your Liberal Christian White Boyfriend to your Conservative Muslim Brown Mother"

Publication: The Plentitudes, Summer 2024

"The Weight of it All"

Publication: The Cost of Our Baggage, Gnashing Teeth Publishing

John Lighthouse

MFA, Creative Writing

"The Heist"

Publication: Asymptote Journal Outsiders special feature

Madison Britt

MFA, Creative Writing

"Down By the Bay"

Publication: Simulacra, BarBar

Isabel Hoin

MFA, Creative Writing

"Those Who Become Ancestors"

Publication: Girls Right The World

"Mother"

Publication: Loud Coffee Press

"All These People"

Publication: The Fool's World

"Things I Can't Say"

Publication: Chariot Press

"Grandmother's Hands in Lancaster, PA"

Publication: Wild Roof Journal

Joshua Niebuurt

PhD, Concentration: Rhetoric, Writing, & Discourse Studies

"Dark Zombiecologies: Trekking through the Transformative Zombie Forest"

Publication: Monsters and Monstrosity in Media: Reflections on Vulnerability, pp. 55–74

“The Sea Services Need Better Personal Data Protection”

Publication: US Naval Proceedings Magazine, 150(4)

The Flesh and Silicon Mesh: A New Materialist Conception of Advanced Digital Machines”

Publication: Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies, Volume 31

Mark Hennion

PhD, Concentration: Rhetoric, Writing, & Discourse Studies

Tepid Splashes and Mighty Typhoons: Examining 70,000 Tons of Metal’s (Post) Pandemic Proxemics”

Publication: Metal Music Studies, Volume 10.2

Martha Zornow

PhD, Concentration: Literary and Cultural Studies

“Sonmi-451’s Revolutionary Fight for Freedom in David Mitchell’s Cloud Atlas”

Publication: Figures of Freedom: Representations of Agency in a Time of Crisis, pp. 233–248

Sam New

MFA Creative Writing

“A Light Begins Inside Her Body”

Publication: Birdcoat Quarterly Issue 19

“They say a Shade is a Ghost”

Publication: Reverie Magazine Issue III

- **“Elizabeth River Trail”**
- **“Turbulence”**

Publication: Constellate

- **“Développé”**
- **“Womb is a landscape”**

Publication: The Nature of Our Times, Poets for Science/Paloma Press

“Dear Human Seeing the Sun”

Publication: Dear Human Community Poem, Poets for Science

Samirah Almutairi

PhD, Concentration: Literary and Cultural Studies

“The Controversy of Teaching World Literature and the Importance of Translation in The Field of English Studies”

Publication: Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies, Volume 8 (1), pp. 227–236

Sana Sayed

PhD, Concentration: Rhetoric, Writing, & Discourse Studies

“Writing counterstories: Ways to challenge dominant narratives in FYC”

Publication: Writing Spaces Vol 7, ed. M. Vetter, M. Stewart, T. Daniels–Lerberg, X. Tan, & C. Charlton pp. 32–44

“Democracy when?: Working towards women’s equality and empowerment in Pakistan”

Publication: Gender Studies: Contemporary Trends and Perspectives pp. 1–13

“Rhetoric of hope: Ecological restoration for a troubled planet”

Publication: Journal of Ecohumanism, 3(4), pp. 1542–1552

Rebekah Sanderlin

MFA, Creative Writing

“My Dad Sacrificed Everything to Retire Early...”

Publication: Business Insider

"I Help War Widows. Donald Trump's Callous Insult..."

Publication: USA Today

"Virginia's Broken Promise to Military Families"

Publication: Military.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF:

*The Lee and Bernard Jaffe Family
Scholarship Fund*

Sydney Walker

*James Harrison & Ellen Douglas Brooke Parker
Scholarship Fund*

Yasmin Edwards

L. Cameron Gregory Scholarship in Journalism

Maria Toombs



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